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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 KATHMANDU 000937

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [CVIS](#) [KFRD](#) [PGOV](#) [NP](#)

SUBJECT: NIV FRAUD RING DUPES WORKERS SEEKING US
EMPLOYMENT

1. SUMMARY: Post uncovered information about a ring of con artists claiming to provide nonimmigrant visas for approximately 6500 USD when Gobin Karki, a victim of the scheme, appeared at the Embassy to collect the visa for which he believed he had paid. The ring, with possible ties to Darjeeling, uses an elaborate ruse including invocation of the name of the current Nepali representative to the United Nations to win the confidence of laborers looking for overseas employment. No fraudulent visa was actually handed over by the perpetrators, and the photocopied foil shown to Karki is unsophisticated and easily detectable as a forgery. Post is working with Nepal Police to investigate the case, and has secured Karki's cooperation for eventual prosecution of the organizers of the ring. End summary.

2. On May 10, Gobin Karki (DPOB 27 February 1971, Nepal) appeared at the Embassy to check on the status of a visa he claimed to have been issued. Presenting a photocopy of the visa foil as "proof" of the issuance, he requested return of his passport. FSNs easily detected that the photocopy was a badly done forgery and brought the case to the attention of ConOff. Mixed typefaces, obviously altered MRV code and a control number that does not match the issue date are the most obvious problems, and further investigation revealed that the foil number (20482105) was originally issued to Mohan Shyam Shrestha in January 1999. During further interview with ConOff, Karki indicated that he had paid 500,000 Nepali rupees (approximately 6500 USD) for a job in and visa to the United States.

3. Having just returned from work in the Gulf, Karki mentioned in a conversation with his sister's landlord, Ram Krishna Shrestha, that he was eager to find additional work overseas. Shrestha stated that he knew a friend who could help and put Karki in touch with Arjun Khatri, the apparent ringleader. Khatri won Karki's confidence by stating that he worked with Murari Raj Sharma, former Secretary of Foreign Affairs, and by showing him photocopies of three U.S. visas he had supposedly helped to obtain for former clients. (Note: Murari Raj Sharma was former Secretary at the MFA and is currently Nepal's Representative to the U.N. Karki never had any direct interaction with Sharma, and post assumes that the con artists are simply using Sharma's name without his knowledge.)

4. Khatri stated that he could arrange German visas for himself, Shrestha and Karki to work in Europe, and collected a total of 340,000 NRs (approximately 4400 USD) from Karki, half for Karki's own visa and half as a loan for Shrestha's. When Khatri came back from Delhi with Cuban visas instead of German, he told Karki that they would have to get additional stamps from the French Embassy in order to travel, and that an easier course would be to apply at the U.S. Embassy. He told Karki that the 340,000 NRs could be applied to his new application with the U.S., and that he would have to pay an additional 164,000 (approximately 2100 USD) in order to claim the visa once issued. A few days later, after Karki was shown a photocopy of the forgery, he deposited the money in a bank account registered to Purushottam Guragai and Rajendra Shivakoti, who Karki states are travel agents. According to Karki, he finally became suspicious when Khatri failed to produce either his passport or the actual visa, and he came to the Embassy himself to investigate.

5. Karki's original plan was to go to Darjeeling himself to track down Khatri, whom he believes may have fled there to live with a second wife, and to file a complaint with the police station in his home district of Jhapa. On the suggestion of ConOff, however, he has decided to cooperate with the Embassy in prosecuting the case through Kathmandu police. Post believes that investigation and prosecution of the case will proceed more quickly with Embassy backing. Karki will also file a complaint with the Labor Ministry, as he was promised a job by Khatri and the Labor Ministry has jurisdiction over persons providing overseas employment.

6. Post will provide Kathmandu police with all information pertaining to the crime, including information about the original recipient of the visa

foil, and our RSO local investigator will accompany Karki when he makes his statement to police.

17. Comment: Though the fraud involved in this scheme is relatively unsophisticated and presents little or no danger of malafide travelers reaching the U.S., the ease with which Karki was duped and the amount of money he was willing to pay help to demonstrate the growing desperation among some of Nepal's working class. Post has already seen an increase in simple fraud at interviews and, as unemployment continues to increase, expects to see additional attempts like this one to take advantage of nave Nepalis seeking higher income in the United States.